DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 362 015 FL 021 450

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TITLE Understanding the Haitian Student: Resources for the French Instructor.
PUB DATE 19 Jul 93
NOTE 20p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Traits; *Culture Conflict; Foreign Countries; French; *Haitian Creole; *Haitians; Higher Education; History; Immigrants; Language Attitudes; Language Variation; *Racial Bias; Secondary Education; Second Language Instruction; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Expectations of Students; Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *French Speaking; Haiti

ABSTRACT

Problems encountered by Haitian immigrant student in United States schools are examined, and information is offered to help secondary and college French teachers deal with this population equitably and knowledgeably. Difficulties for immigrants from Haiti, particularly students, include differences between Haitian Creole and standard spoken French and the attitudes held about Creole, attitudes about European French culture and Haitian culture, and racial bias manifested in classroom interaction and teacher expectations. Information for teachers includes: a survey of the major points of Haitian history; a description of the structure of Haitian secondary education and the "baccalaureat," including commonly-held attitudes about education and social class; notes on Haitian higher education; and useful words and expressions in Haitian Creole. Contains 14 references. (MSE)

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ED 362 015

UNDERSTANDING THE HAITIAN STUDENT: RESOURCES FOR THE FRENCH INSTRUCTOR

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19 July 1993

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UNDERSTANDING THE HAITIAN STUDENT: RESOURCES FOR THE FRENCH INSTRUCTOR

General Statement of the Problem

The American effort to cultivate diversity in culture, language and individual personality has not adversely affected our ability to be Americans. Furthermore, the development of bilingual programs are still important issues in public schools today. It is also axiomatic that a student produces more when he/she feels respected. Everyone learns more about the world and how to survive when the curriculum recognizes cultural and linguistic diversity.

For many years, Haitian immigrants have descended upon several Caribbean nations and ultimately their immigration turned toward the United States and Canada. From 1912 to 1928 thousands of Haitians left for the sugar cane fields of the Dominican Republic and Cuba during the American occupation (1915 - 1934). By 1950 the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic numbered 19,000; however by 1970 the number of Haitians increased to 300,000 (Hubron, 1987, p. 28). Modern estimates of the Haitian population now exceed 400,000. In recent history 70,000 Haitians arrived in the United States, with Miami being the favorite departure site. This population now exceeds 300,000. Four reasons may be postulated about this mass exodus:

1. Two successive regimes headed by the Duvalier family and the present political turmoil

2. Rapid population growth from 1970 to date

3. Poor economy with high unemployment

4. Prohibitive immigration to the Bahamas, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique (pp. 25-38).

From a linguistic standpoint, this Haitian exodus brought Creole to American cities and schools. If language is a symbol of culture and reality, Creole is Haitian culture and reality. In Haiti, it is estimated that only 10 - 15% of Haitians function in French with only a feeble 5% reaching true mastery of the language (Fleischmann, 1987, p. 21; Fombrun, 1989, pp. 21-24). On the other hand, Creole is spoken by almost everyone in Haiti and is co-official with French. One could say again that Creole is the soul of Haitian thought, humor and song. Conversely, French is the language of the middle and upper classes, secondary and higher education, and public administration (Paquin, 1985, p. 236).

American teachers of French have recognized that a thorough knowledge of and proficiency in the foreign culture and the ability to teach functionally and creatively are advisable. Students are to understand basic cultural patterns of Francophonic communities as they manifest themselves overseas and in their own community. One problem occurs when many Haitian students enter American schools; their reality is challenged by Parisian French and its cultural orientation in the typical French course.

These students may be uprooted from their cultural and linguistic enclave where individual worth, socializing influences, kinship systems, perceptual and conceptual styles, and ethnic history differ dramatically from European French and Anglo societies. Furthermore, the student's language, that is Creole, is subtly assailed and therefore their sense of reality is challenged.

Another problem manifests itself in the faculty and staff of the French department. Many instructors are concerned about equity and fair treatment for groups that have experienced discrimination; some are culturally aware and effective with diverse groups of students. However these signs of progress may be deceptive. Other instructors are uncomfortable with a major indigenous form of French. Many instructors and unfortunately many Haitians believe that Creole is inferior to French, and blame Creole for the poor academic performance of many Haitian immigrants.

Another problem faced by the instructor is the influence of race and class, even when ability is equivalent. Research indicates that instructors surreptitiously expect middle class social characteristics from all students (Rist, 1970, pp. 411-451). Sorensen and Hallinan (1986) corroborate this impact of social class on instruction. Gay (1974) maintains that racial and ethnic inequalities may persist in the classroom: minority students are asked fewer questions, are given less instructional time, and are less praised and encouraged.

Many French instructors may be unaware that they exhibit differential treatment patterns with minority students.

For purpose of this report, it is assumed that:

1. No culture's values as a whole may be judged inherently superior or inferior to anothers (Pusch, 1981, p. 4).

2. Categorizing can lead to stereotyping: race and color, dress, behavior, gender, socio-economic status are simplistic ways to judge students.

3. A person produces more when he/she feels respected.

4. The desire for cultural maintenance is strong.

5. Creoles, dialects, pidgins are not uncultivated registers of speech.

This report is intended for those secondary and university instuctors of French whose courses normally focus on elementary, intermediate and advanced proficiency in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) while fostering an awareness of the Francophonic presence in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and North America. Specific to this report is a brief repertoire of basic information about some Haitian realities, realities about which most French instuctors in America know little or nothing: Haitian history, educational systems and linguistic characteristics.

This report begins with a schematic survey of the major points of Haitian history. The second section surveys the secondary school and the Haitian baccalauréat, and some comments on higher education in Haiti. The third section offers some useful words and expressions in Creole. The

author of this report decided to use ONACC (Office National d'Alphabétisation et d'Action Communautaire) orthography to facilitate pronunciation for the French instructor.

BRIEF SURVEY OF HAITIAN HISTORY

5 December 1492	Columbus lands at Môle St. Nicolas
1751-1758	Macandal leads a revolt against the French. Captured and executed by the French
21-22 August 1791	Slave revolt in the North and the appearance of Toussaint Louverture
29 August 1793	Slavery abolished Bonaparte appoints Toussaint Louverture Général de Division. André Rigaud is Général de Brigade of the South.
1796-1802	Toussaint Louverture is leader-ruler of St. Domingue
June 1802	Toussaint Louverture betrayed and exiled to France. The French are defeated by Générals Dessalines, Christophe, Pétion and Geffrard.
1 January 1804	Act of Independance at Gonaives
8 October 1804	Dessalines proclaimed Emperor Jacques I.
17 October 1806	Dessalines assassinated
December 1806	Haiti declared a republic. By February Christophe proclaimed president of the North; Pétion declared president of the South.
1807-1818	Alexandre Pétion proclaimed president of a unified Haiti.
1818-1843	Jean Pierre Boyer becomes president and institutes the Rural Code of 1826.
	REVOLUTION OF 1843
1847-1859	Faustin Soulouque becomes Emperor Faustin I
15 January 1859	Fabre Nicholas Geffrard organizes a revolt against Faustin I and becomes president (1859-1867).
1879-1888	President Salomon allows foreigners to bleed the treasury; Salomon is overthrown and exiled to France.

1900-1915	Peasant revolts and the cacos, a band of mercenaries terrorizing the country. There is growing alarm in the United States.
1915-1934	THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION
1915-1922	Dartiguenave is president.
1922-1930	Louis Borno declared president of Haiti.
1930-1941	Sténio Vincent is freely elected president, known as "Papa Vincent", the dictator with culture.
1941-1946	Elie Lescot proclaimed president and American pro-consul: American financial interests grow and a thriving blackmarket springs up.
16 August 1946	THE NEW HAITIAN SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Dumarsais Estime elected president (1946-1950)

1. Tourism explodes. World interest in Haitian folkloric dance, music and primitive paintings and sculpture.

2. Fortunes made in banana interests.

3. New generation of politicians

4. Resurgence of the Black classes: Black Power the Haitian Way

5. Emergence of Haiti first Black millionaire (Clemart J. Charles)

1950-1956	The presidency of Général Paul Magloire
1957-1971	The presidency of François Duvalier
1971-1987	The regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier. Jean-Claude Duvalier is exiled to France.
1987 to date	Political instability with several heads of government one after another: Général Henri Namphy, Leslie Manigat, Prosper Avril, Ertha Pascal Trouillot, Jean Bertrand Arristide, Marc Bazin, and Général Raoul Cédras. Général Raoul Cédras has signed a document of reconciliation with former president Arristide. President Arristide is to assume power in late October 1993 (Paquin, 1983).

SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN HAITI

Every nation has the responsibility to define educational systems according to its history, geography, and sociology. Haitian educational systems began in the eighteenth century under the aegis of Father Botin and several orders of nuns. The purposes of this system were:

> 1. to establish a corps of men and women to manage administrative, financial and judicial functions of the nation,
>
> 2. to train budding members of Parliament, foreign embassies and consulates,
>
> 3. to develop a cadre of lawyers, engineers, physicians, pharmacists and agronomists,
>
> 4. to instruct a new generation of professors, journalists, historians, social workers and literary figures (Fombrun, 1989, pp. 16-17.

It is evident that the Catholic Church and the religious orders wanted to build a professional corps of experts that would set acceptable standards of practice for this young nation. General content, basic curriculum, and materials followed the classical French model with selection and promotion of the best and the brightest the ultimate goal. Nonetheless, assessment, evaluation and grading using the French model excluded the huge lower classes, thus creating a small French-speaking élite, both Black and mulatto.

The baccalauréat was instituted in 1907 by the great Haitian poet Léon Laleau under the regime of President Nord Alexis. The Haitian baccalauréat represents the

terminus to secondary studies prognosticating success in higher education. This criterion-referenced examination defined by the Minister of Education comprises two parts: (1) la rhétorique, an examination of general knowledge and allows access to the second part; (2) la philosophie which covers one year of study and determines university entrance (Marc-Antoine, 1988, pp. 7-10).

Similar to its French analog, the baccalauréat is an intensive examination of knowledge, logic and writing skills. It is well-known that since this examination is official and public, failure comes to elicit feelings of humiliation and self-blame for both students and parents. Of course, this anxious time compares with the French system since both the Haitian and French examinations have comparable objectives. Both nations are aware of the debilitative anxiety of the candidates (Marc-Antoine, 1988, pp. 9-32; Journal Français, 1992, p. 5).

In Haiti, there is a problem of social inequality associated with the baccalauréat: students who attend secondary school in upper income areas of cities do not have the high failure rate of those who attend the école borlette. Fombrun (1989) and Fleischmann (1987) state that there is a correlation between school site-socio-economic level and success with the baccalauréat. Furthermore, other school effects on pupil progress differentiate middle and upper class pupils from their

less affluent peers: (1) French is the reserve of the élite; (2) the upper classes maintain a positive attitude toward learning; (3) higher socio-economic status translates into higher occupational prestige and aspiration; (4) school and bourgeois cultures are complementary; (5) private schools outnumber public secondary schools; and (6) the curriculum demands an urban field independent orientation emphasizing exactness, descriptive-analytical responses, concentration, and logic (Marc-Antoine, 1989, p. 22; Bernstein, 1975). Nevertheless, the Haitian secondary school does not differ significantly from secondary schools in Latin America and the Third World: a cadre of élite young men and women must be educated to carry out the administration of the nation and the transmission of culture.

Higher education in Haiti culminates in the Université d'Etat d'Haiti (UEH) which functions as the educational arbiter of national and professional development. The UEH, located in downtown Port-au-Prince, performs as a social and educational organization of students, professors and researchers whose values, beliefs and expectations attempt to temper Haitian society. Nonetheless, depending upon the political climate, students and professors may not be allowed considerable room for individual decision making. There is a tendency to work under the norms of national politics. In addition to identifiable hierarchies in the administrative component, higher education is both a closed self-sufficient

entity and an open system that depends on political and social systems for survival.

In 1985, there were 5,187 students in higher education of whom 92% were enrolled in the UEH. The UEH was divided into five basic facultés.

FACULTE	ENROLLMENT
INAGHEI	1400
Droit et Section Economique	700
Ethnologie	534
Faculté des Sciences	314
Faculté des Sciences Humaines	304
Agronomie	171

Last of all, many students attend American, European and Canadian universities. Before the American occupation (1915-1934) it was common to attend French universities, but during the tumultuous regime of Elie Lescot (1941-1946), hundreds of Haitians travelled to the U.S. for technical and university training. The number of Haitian sojourners increased dramatically during the Estime administration (1946-1950) because of the need for additional Black technicians, ambassadors and public administrators (Paquin, 1983). Haitians with impeccable American and European credentials exist through the middle and upper classes. Conversely, many professors of the UEH have lectured in Latin America, North America and Western Europe (Pierre-Charles, 1988, pp. 3-4).

CREOLE

Although French may be spoken by a small minority of the Haitian population, Creole is spoken by almost every Haitian citizen whether he/she admits it or not. This relatively young language based upon French vocabulary and African morphology, Creole, the vernacular and lingua franca, persists in daily conversation, in printed form, and in the media. Creole is probably the most obvious reality in maintaining Haitian culture; it is fundamental to intimate gossip and joking, to proverbs and songs, to urban and rural enclaves, and to an authentic identity.

Creole vocalic sounds are indicated schematically:

FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
i	ou	u
é		o, on
è, in		ò
a, an		

The eight simple vowels are: a, é, è, i, o, ò, ou, u.
The three nasalized vowels are: an, in, on.

Creole consonants are: b, ch, d, dj, f, g, gn, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, tch, v, y, z.

For clarity: ch = American "sh" or the French /ʃ/
dj = American "j"
gn = French /ɲ/
j = French /ʒ/
r = like American "w"
s = French /s/
tch = American "ch"

It must be noted that even in some French speaking Haitians, some Creole phonemes may persist, such as /R/ becomes /w/ and /y/ becomes /i/. French instructors <u>should not</u> develop a negative reaction to these Creole phonemes. There are some stigmatizing effects even in Haiti among the upper class against those who are unable to pronounce /R/ and /y/ in Parisian French. It is preferable to guide the Haitian student into making inferences about these phonemes from constrastive pairs and self correct the errors. A positive emotional climate must be maintained when Creole phonology and morphology interfere with standard French.

Some Basic Creole

Greetings: Kòman ou yé-- How are you?

Kòman nou yé-- How are you?

Bam-m nouvèl ou-- What's new?

Responses: M-la--I'm alright.
M-trè byin--very well
M-pa pi mal-- not bad
M-ap débat-- Getting along, struggling along.
M-ap kembé-- I'm getting along OK.

Farewell: Orévoua-- Good bye
Babbay -- Bye Bye
N-a oué-- See you later
Bon kouraj-- Keep your chin up!

Other expressions: Bonjou Msié -- Good day, sir.
Bonjou Madam-- Good day, madam
Bonjou Madmouazèl--Good day, miss

Bonsoua-- Good evening

Commands: Kampé-- Stay, Stand up
Tann-- Wait
Chita-la-a -- Sit there
Antré-- Come in
Méte-- Put
Gadé-- Look
Kouri-- Run
Ouè -- See
Ekri -- Write
Palé -- Speak
Li -- Read
Travay -- Work
Etudyé -- Study
Dòmi -- Sleep
Bouè -- Drink
Désann -- Go down; Get out (vehicle)
Pèmèt -- Allow
Poté -- Bring
Voyé -- Send
Mandé -- Ask
Fèmin -- Close
Louvri -- Open
Rété -- Stop

Ban-m -- Give me
Ba-l -- Give him/her
Ba-yo -- Give them
Ban-nou-- Give us

Kité-m -- Let me
Kité-l -- Let him/her
Kité-nou -- Let us

Home: (Kay)

fénèt -- window
éskalié -- stairs
fotèy -- arm chair
chèz -- chair
kuizi-n -- kitchen
biro -- office
chanm -- bedroom
piès -- room
sal dé bingn -- bathroom

plaka -- closet
pòt -- door
tab -- table
kabann -- bed
frijidè -- refrigerator
fou -- stove
basin -- tub
lavabo -- sink

Time: (Lè) and Day (Jou)

Ki jou jodia-a yé -- What day is it?
Jodia-a sé dimanch, lindi, mardi, mèkridi, jédi, vandrédi, samdi--
Today is Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday,

Saturday.

Ki dat jodia-a yé -- What is the date today?
Ki lè li yé -- What time is it?

Nan ki moua ou fèt-- In which month were you born?

janvié
févriyé
mas
avril
mé
jin
jiyé
out
séptanm
oktòb
novanm
désanm

In the restaurant: (nan réstoran)

Msié, Madam, Madmouzèl, ki sa ouap pran?
Sir, Madam, Miss, what will you have?

Ki sa ouap bouè? -- What will you drink?

M-rinmin -- I like

mayi-- corn
duri-- rice
poua-- bean, pea
patat-- sweet potato
zaboka -- avocado
pondétè-- potato
griyo -- fried pork
pouason-- fish
pintad-- guinea fowl
poul-- chicken
kabrit -- goat
tomat -- tomato

dlo -- water
lèt -- milk
pin -- bread
biswit-- biscuit, rolls
zé -- egg
gato -- cake
krèm -- ice cream

kuiyè-- spoon
kouto -- knife
asièt -- plate
bòl -- bowl

sèl -- salt
piman-- hot pepper
doliv-- olive

Clothes (Rad, Kosti-m) and Colors (Koulè)

sapat-- sandal
chapo-- hat
chémiz -- shirt
ròb -- dress
pantalon -- pants
Kombyin sa- a? How much?

jon -- yellow
brin-- brown
blan -- white
vèt -- green
noua -- black
blé -- blue
rouj -- red
roz -- pink
zoranj -- orange
zinga -- reddish gray

Nationalities:

M- Amérikin
Anglé
Ayisyin
Japoné
Pagnol
Fransé
Jamayikin

Parts of Body:

chévé -- hair
jé -- eye
nin -- nose
vant -- stomach
pié -- foot
zépòl -- shoulder
douèt -- finger
min -- hand
pwal -- body hair
bouch-- mouth
kou -- neck
po -- skin
bra -- arm

Other useful Expressions:

Kòman yo rélé ou? -- What is your name?
Yo rélé-m _____. --My name is _____.

Ki sa sa-a yé? -- What is it?
Ki sa ou fèt? -- What do you do?

M-achté-- I am buying.
Vi-n di-m -- Come tell me.
Koté ou pralé? -- Where are you going?
Ki sa ou bézouin? __ What do you need?

(adapted from Jeanty, Speak Creole and Brenton, New English-Creole Dictionary, 1985)

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report was to provide secondary and university instructors of French some basic information about three Haitian realities: history, secondary-university studies, and Creole. Since members of ethnic and racial minority groups, such as Haitians, experience the inescapable reality of Anglo culture and language, and the European French taught in the foreign language department, they may experience various levels of anxiety upon being ejected from the urban and linguistic enclave in which family, culture and language reinforce their identity. Cultural self-affirmation maintains Haitian mental health; therefore, a basic knowledge of the student to whom one teaches is a survival mechanism for French instructors. The French instructor must not be afraid to open channels of communication with Haitian students. It is, of course, through knowledge that we liberate ourselves from insularity and the backwaters of prejudice.

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